

TARRANT & TEXAS

Opinion Low-income women are caught in the middle of fight over health funding ^{9B}

Aquarium helps get turtle back to the Gulf

❖ The Kemp's ridley sea turtle was found injured on the Dutch seashore.

By Marty Sabota

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Somehow, Flip the sea turtle wound up stranded and abandoned thousands of miles away from her home in the Gulf of Mexico.

The endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle was found by passers-by in Holland, and her future

looked bleak.

"She was so emaciated and really struggling," said Iain Scouller, general manager for Sea Life Grapevine Aquarium, which is playing a significant role in Flip's rescue and rehabilitation. "It was touch and go."

These days, her future is looking much brighter.

Flip is resting comfortably in Texas while plans

More on TURTLE, 7B



Flip was flown to Port Aransas, where she is in rehabilitation and gaining weight and strength, and she will eventually be released into the Gulf of Mexico.

Courtesy of Sea Life

Turtle

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are being made to continue her rehabilitation and then release her into the sea off the Texas coast.

"We're halfway there," Scouller said from Port Aransas, where he is helping care for her. "Our fingers are crossed that we are looking at a happy ending. Her shell is shining and her eyes are bright."

The juvenile turtle is 14 inches long and 15 inches wide.

The effort to save her is an international cooperation of Sea Life Scheveningen in Holland and Sea Life in Grapevine, as well as other agencies.

Flip was found injured, cold, stunned and stranded on the shores of the Netherlands, near the city of The Hague, on Dec. 10.

"We have no idea how she got there," Scouller said. "We don't think someone took her there deliberately."

She was taken to Sea Life Scheveningen to begin a long rehabilitation.

After her first month at Sea Life and much TLC from the staff, Flip started eating again, and since January has steadily

grown, gaining weight and strength. Since that time, several international partners have worked together to get her back home to the Gulf of Mexico.

Flip flew nonstop from Amsterdam to Houston on KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.

"I've not come across an animal that has coped as well as she has," Scouller said. "Turtles aren't meant to fly in airplanes."

After arriving in the United States, Flip was taken to a bonded area, "where she got VIP treatment," Scouller said.

She was transported by the Sea Life Grapevine team to the Port Aransas Animal Rehabilitation Keep for a health assessment.

She will be given time to acclimate to Texas before being released into the Gulf.

Also participating are the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, Animal Rehabilitation Keep, the U.S. National Park Service, the government of the Netherlands, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The teamwork has paid off, Scouller said.

"She's in great health, and even slightly overweight," Scouller said. "We're all very happy."



Members of the Dutch media watch Flip the sea turtle, who was found stranded on the shores of Holland. Two Sea Life aquariums and other agencies brought her to Texas.

Courtesy of Sea Life Scheveningen Aquarium